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## **When and How Parliaments Influence Foreign Policy: The Case of Turkey's Iraq Decision**

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Turkey's decision on its role in the Iraq war in 2003 illustrates the power –and limits– of parliaments as actors in foreign policy. Traditionally, assemblies are not seen as important players in the foreign policies of parliamentary democracies. Instead, cabinets are generally considered the chief policymaking authorities. If the government enjoys a parliamentary majority, legislatures typically support the cabinet, if they are brought into the process at all. The March 1, 2003 vote by the Turkish parliament to not allow the United States to use Turkey as a base for the Iraq invasion challenges this conventional wisdom on parliamentary influence (in addition to many interest-based explanations of foreign policy). This paper examines this decision in the context of the role of parliaments in foreign policies and explores the relationships between parliamentary influence, leadership, intraparty politics, and public opinion.

Keywords: parliaments, foreign policy, Turkey, Iraq war

## INTRODUCTION

On March 1, 2003, the parliament of Turkey, the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA), surprised the United States and much of the world when it refused to ratify the Turkish cabinet's decision to permit the United States to use Turkey as a base for its northern front as part of the U.S. intervention into Iraq. Turkey's decision came after lengthy negotiations with the United States, and was one of the most significant foreign policy decisions in its history.

Turkey's predominantly Muslim population, its alliance with the United States, and its geo-strategic location put it in an uneasy spot in the months leading to the war. The public was strongly against a war in Iraq and specifically against any Turkish involvement in such a conflict. Neighboring Iraq, Turkey faced immense consequences of a war: emigration from Iraq (as happened in 1991), threat of being a retaliatory target, and economic costs. Most importantly, Turkey was concerned with the implications for the Kurds in the region: preserving Iraq's territorial integrity (i.e., by preventing the emergence of a Kurdish state) was its major concern.

For the United States, a northern front was critical for its war plans. In contrast to southern Iraq where the Shiite population was dominant and likely to challenge the coalition forces, the north was under the Kurdish control and the Kurds supported the United States. By entering Iraq from both the north and the south, Iraqi forces would be more easily defeated. In order to open a northern front, the United States needed full cooperation from Turkey.

The Turkish parliament's decision is puzzling from multiple perspectives. It was unexpected at the time because Turkey was a member of NATO and traditionally has been a strong ally of the United States. In addition, it was in Turkey's national interest to be involved so that it could better control the situation in the northern Kurdish region of Iraq. Moreover, the vulnerable economy needed U.S. economic support. Thus, failure to support the US war efforts would jeopardize Turkish political and economic interests.

Turkey's decision is also puzzling because parliament went against the cabinet. This was a significant departure from political tradition in Turkey. Moreover, that the TGNA had a decisive role in such an important decision challenges expectations in the comparative politics and foreign policy literature on the role of parliaments in national foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Parliaments are not expected to have influence, especially when a single party controls a legislative majority, as the Justice and Development Party has since 2002.

This challenge to conventional wisdom on the role of parliaments in foreign policy is our focus. We use the decision on Iraq as opportunity to explore the limited research and the general theoretical expectations about parliamentary influence in democratic foreign policy. We argue that parliaments are more powerful than is often assumed, even when a single party enjoys a majority. Formal powers of parliaments vary across countries, but constitutional factors are only a starting point for research. Party leadership, intraparty politics, and public opinion are all related to legislative-executive relations in foreign policymaking. In addition to examining these factors in the Turkish case to offer a more complete understanding of this important decision, we hope to inspire future research on parliaments and foreign policy by offering specific ideas to guide subsequent investigations.

## PARLIAMENTS & FOREIGN POLICY

### *The Conventional Wisdom: Little Influence*

There is very little systematic research on the role of legislatures in the foreign policy of parliamentary democracies. As Dietrich, Hummel, and Marschall (2008:10) state, “so far the literature of comparative research has marginalized foreign and security policy issues and largely ignored parliament’s role in foreign and security policy-making, with the exception of the U.S. Congress.” This lack of attention stems from the idea that parliaments do not influence foreign affairs. This conventional wisdom is partly based in historical experience. According to Hill, although there are examples of parliaments influencing foreign policy, “against these cases,...may be set many more, equally ‘high politics’ in character, where executives have been able to circumvent parliamentary powers without difficulty, or simply to drive a coach and horses through the gaps not covered by the constitution” (Hill 2003:255). Hill argues the greatest powers that parliaments have are not based on formal provisions for affecting foreign policy, but instead on their ability to supervise, scrutinize, and investigate. But, he adds, “here too their capacity to constrain and participate is limited...” (Hill 2003:256).

The few general analyses of parliamentary influence in foreign policy that exist agree. Hänggi (2004:15), for example, writes: “Parliamentary accountability of foreign and security affairs tends to be weak in most political systems.” Ku (2004:33) also paints an undemocratic

picture of foreign policy in modern democracies: “Ensuring accountability to citizens for the use of military forces was a central component of the struggle to establish democratic forms of government. But since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, decisions about whether to use military forces can be made in international institutions far from the legislatures that democratic governments have relied on to provide such accountability.”

The conventional wisdom that parliaments are not significant players in foreign affairs is also based on the political relationships inherent in parliamentary systems. Theoretically (and constitutionally) parliaments often have formal powers to control the cabinet. Governments are born out of parliaments, creating a “fusion of powers.” Broadly speaking, “all the systems that we call parliamentary require governments to be appointed, supported and, as the case may be, dismissed, by parliamentary vote” (Sartori 1997:101). Parliamentary support is the backbone of parliamentary government; without this, it cannot govern. Yet the legislature follows the lead of the executive in decisionmaking. Particularly when a single party government (especially those with a sound parliamentary majority) governs, it may seem futile to focus on parliament’s role. One can even argue that “[a] determined parliamentary government can then do as it wishes, so long as it has a legislative majority” (Weaver and Rockman 1993:17). Indeed, parliaments are often characterized as rubber stamp institutions. Rarely is this common view challenged (see Martin and Vanberg 2004), but is reinforced in most comparative politics textbooks.

Party discipline is one key feature of cabinet-legislative relationships with frequent “calls for the parliamentary party to vote in unison” (Sartori 1997:190). Most parties have whips, who reinforce party discipline (Weaver and Rockman 1993:33). Parliamentary parties have mechanisms to reward legislators (through appointments in committees or ministerial office) and punish defectors (limiting ‘pork’ and access to party leadership). Party discipline enables

governments “to perform a variety of policymaking tasks...” and increases the chances that their preferences translate into policy outcomes (Weaver and Rockman 1993:12). This is arguably even stronger for single party governments –since it suggests “upholding one’s own single-party government” is “rational discipline” (Sartori 1997:191). Indeed, it is assumed that single-party governments are less vulnerable to removal from office (Palmer, London, and Regan 2004). As long as the members of the governing party remain as a unified group (even when some opposition is granted) in voting, parliament’s powers do not have any practical effect.

These general assumptions are particularly applicable to foreign policy. Parliaments rarely challenge the executive on national security matters. They do not have the expertise to rival that of the foreign and defense ministries and they do not want to compromise the country’s image of a united front when facing an external foe. Single party governments are expected to have even greater control in foreign policy (Maoz and Russett 1993) since foreign policy is expected to be the most resilient to party factionalism (Heidenheimer 1959:75). The notion that as factions “stop their politics at the water’s edge” and “rally ‘round the flag’” is seen, for example, in literature on British foreign policy (Hagan 1993:31). Moreover, even if parliaments could potentially leverage cabinets, they might exercise this power, since “a key problem is that most parliamentarians remain quite parochial and national in their concerns...” (Greene 2004:30).

Although this conventional wisdom is grounded in both empirical record and the political dynamics of parliamentary systems, recent research challenges this expectation and suggests a more complicated role for parliaments. Three areas in particular – research on two-level games, work on political opposition and decision units, and studies following in the tradition of the democratic peace – offer insights into parliamentary roles in foreign policy.



### *Parliaments in Two-level Games*

Following Putnam (1988), many studies have examined how international negotiators sit at the intersection of international (Level I) and domestic (Level II) ‘games’. Domestic political games can constrain negotiators and, according to Putnam, are necessary to understand international agreements. “Around the domestic table behind...[the leader] sit party and parliamentary figures, spokespersons for domestic agencies, representatives of key interest groups, and the leader’s own political advisors” (Putnam 1988:434). A key aspect of the Level II is ratification and the domestic institutions that condition the representation of domestic preferences. According to Putnam, ratification is typically thought of as a parliamentary function, but can be conceptualized more broadly as well. Putnam incorporates Schelling’s (1960) insight on international bargaining and the advantage that domestic constraints, such as requirements of parliamentary ratification, can create for states. Indeed, executives may use the potential of parliamentary veto to their advantage in international negotiations (Hill 2003:254).

Although research on two-level games certainly opened the door for the analysis of parliamentary powers, Pahre (1997:148) argues that existing theories of parliamentary constraint “...which are based on American institutions, may not be able to explain the oversight pattern we find in European parliamentary democracies. The problem of hand tying is different in parliamentary systems because the same parties make up the legislature, choose a government, and form an opposition....Models that treat executive preferences as exogenous are appropriate

for a directly elected executive but exclude the government formation problem that is central to parliamentary government.” Pahre is not suggesting that parliamentary constraints do not exist, but that they depend on specific oversight mechanisms that vary across the European Union (EU) countries he examines. Similarly, Martin contends that parliamentary ratification procedures are important for the complex international negotiations in the EU. Denmark’s requirement of a five-sixths majority parliamentary approval, for example, disproportionately increased Danish interests in the Maastricht Treaty (Martin 2001).

Clearly, research inspired by Putnam’s two-level game metaphor challenges the view of parliaments in foreign policy and underlines the need for research on the conditions under which parliaments can be influential. From this literature, we can take away the following: 1) two-level games are different in parliamentary systems; 2) the second level and ratification stage varies significantly across parliamentary systems; and 3) the effect of parliaments is hand-tying which can translate into bargaining advantages in international negotiations.

### *Parliaments as Oppositions & Decision Units*

The literature on political oppositions and decision units also confronts the notion that executives generally dominate foreign policy decisionmaking and proposes that foreign policy decisionmaking authority is often diffused across multiple actors in all types of political systems. Hagan (1993) argues political opposition is a potentially important source of foreign policy in both democracies and non-democracies. In parliamentary systems, Hagan (1993:26) suggests

“[a]lthough able to dominate the legislature, the prime minister is at a disadvantage because he or she normally shares considerable political power with the collective party leadership in the cabinet, which in turn depends upon the support of the parliamentary party.” After reviewing the literature, he concludes that “[e]ven one-party cabinets in parliamentary systems—when they have well-defined internal divisions—do not have any particular immunity from domestic opposition” (Hagan 1993:36).

This is consistent with Hagan’s collaborative research on decision units (Hagan and Hermann 2001; Hermann, Hermann, and Hagan 1987). The decision units project provides a framework for assessing what type of actor(s) have foreign policymaking authority. Three types of units are possible –predominant leaders, single groups, and coalitions of autonomous actors– and each unit is characterized by a key variable that conditions decisionmaking dynamics. Coalitions of autonomous actors occur when no single group or actor has authority to commit resources in foreign affairs. “Foreign policy decision making in these settings is very fragmented and centers on the willingness and ability of multiple, politically autonomous actors to achieve agreement to enact policy” (Hagan et al. 2001:169). A key proposition in this area of research is that decisionmaking authority is variable, fluid and does not necessarily conform to constitutional provisions.

This framework and the coalition of autonomous actors decision unit could, theoretically, incorporate parliamentary influence. In extant decision units research, however, executive-legislative relations in parliamentary systems are unaccounted for. While there are some references to the executive and legislative interaction, these are in the context of presidential systems, and there is no detailed discussion of similar cases in parliamentary systems. Moreover, although Hermann (2001:55) argues that "the ratification of a decision" is "of less interest" to the

decision units framework. Decisions such as a declaration of war (where the executive and legislative are together involved in the decisionmaking) are definitely authoritative decisions. Nevertheless the framework does not provide an explanation of these decision processes. Finally, it is unclear how “autonomous” the parliament is from the executive, since the executive is born out of the parliament and the parties in the cabinet are also in the legislature.

Despite these problems with the specific application of the decision units framework to parliamentary systems, this research, along with work on political oppositions, provides some important insights. From this, we can take away the following: 1) parliaments may be an important form of opposition, even in single party governments; 2) decisionmaking authority can change across occasions for decision; and 3) the relationship between parliaments and cabinets may lie somewhere in between coalition/institutional dynamics and group dynamics.

### *Parliaments as Constraints in the Democratic Peace*

Extensions of research on the democratic peace have also paid attention to the role of parliaments and parliamentary characteristics as constraints in international conflict. Indeed, parliamentary power is one of the key mechanisms underlying the structural explanation of the democratic peace (Wagner 2006). Dietrich et al. (2008) even argue that the democratic peace can be operationalized as the “parliamentary peace” because parliaments are more responsive to war-averse citizens.

As research has moved away from comparing democracies with authoritarian systems (and democratic dyads with non-democratic dyads), scholars have ‘unpacked’ democracies to better assess the nature of structural constraints in these systems. Peterson (1995) argues that the degree of executive autonomy from the legislature is an important component that affects foreign policy and that these vary among democracies. She contends that in many democracies, executives are fairly free from parliamentary constraints and this “...is easily overlooked by democratic peace theorists” (Peterson 1995:16). In other democracies, such as nineteenth-century Britain and France, the executives were not autonomous from legislative influence: “the survival of a cabinet...required the maintenance of majority support within Parliament, and the cabinet therefore possesses little freedom of action even in foreign affairs” (Peterson 1995:17).

A number of democratic peace quantitative studies have focused on the role of the legislature as a constraint in conflict situations. Reiter and Tillman (2002), for example, examine variation in legislative control over the executive (in terms of treaty ratification) among democracies. They find that countries with stronger legislative power over treaty ratification are less likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes. According to LeBlang and Chan (2003), democratic peace researchers have offered contradictory expectations regarding whether parliamentary or presidential democratic systems are more constrained. The contradictions turn on the question of executive autonomy from the legislature. They argue that even “the leaders of a single party may be self-deterred from initiating or escalating a conflict because they are reluctant to invite domestic political challenge, perhaps to the point of forcing an election. Moreover, members of a single ‘catch-all’ party may actually have substantially different political views” (LeBlang and Chan 2003:390). In their analysis of war involvement, whether the system is parliamentary and whether the government is divided were not statistically

significant factors for explaining war involvement. They did, however, find that states with electoral systems based on proportional representation are less likely to be involved in war. LeBlang and Chan (2003) suggest “the existence of constitutional provisions for the separation of powers or a formal system of checks and balances does not seem to be the key determinant. Instead of supposing that only *competitive* politics can restrain war involvement, an informal culture and a traditional practice of *consensual* politics may serve as an equally and perhaps even more effective barrier to such involvement” (LeBlang and Chan 2003:396; italics in original). Even a single dominant party, they contend, is more likely to promote consultation and consensus-based policies in proportional representation systems.

Much of the democratic peace-inspired research comparing different types of parliamentary systems supports the view that single party cabinets that hold a majority of seats in parliament are not very constrained in conflict situations. According to Elman, when a single party controls a majority in parliament, “despite the fact that the executive is chosen by the legislature and is dependent on its confidence, there are no institutional veto points to thwart the... [executive]. The executive can count on legislative approval for its foreign policy positions largely because voting against the government implies handing it over to the opposition” (Elman 2000:98).

Several other analyses support Elman’s theoretical claim. Auerswald’s (1999) study focuses on legislative control within parliamentary systems, arguing that whether executives who are subject to legislative confidence will be reluctant to use force. He also proposes that legislatures that have the ability to overturn the executive’s use of force will constrain the executive. Single party cabinets, according to Auerswald, face accountability but have total control over the agenda. Thus, “executives in majority parliamentary governments are relatively

likely to use force” since party discipline helps ensure that the rank-and-file in parliament will support the party leadership (Auerswald 1999:479). Palmer, London, and Regan (2004) specifically examine the executive’s strength in the parliament and majority versus minority status in terms of dispute initiation and dispute escalation. They find statistically significant support for their hypotheses that the higher percentage of seats controlled by cabinet constrains the executive from military involvement and that minority governments are less likely to become involved in militarized disputes.

Overall, quantitative studies on the democratic peace suggest the following: 1) parliaments do play some role even in “high politics” security issues; and 2) there is no consensus on the effects of different institutional arrangements and the causality underlying correlational findings.

### *Parliaments & Foreign Policy: Remaining Questions*

Overall, these areas of research challenge the conventional wisdom that parliaments do not have much influence in foreign policy. Instead, we see a more complicated role for parliaments. Questions remain, however, about the conditions under which parliaments are likely to have an effect. Even if the conventional wisdom holds true for many cases, it is important to know when and how parliaments play a role in foreign policy. Although some research suggests that single party majority governments are likely to be unconstrained by parliaments, there may be factors that facilitate a role for parliaments even in these situations.

Studies on variation in formal powers are an important foundation for understanding the role that parliaments may play, but will not likely provide a complete picture, as previous research suggests that intraparty politics and public opinion impact the relationship between parliament and cabinet. Finally, research suggests more study on the specific effects parliaments have on the policymaking process, the policy outcome, and bargaining advantage in international negotiations.

We use the case of the Turkish parliament's decision to explore these factors. In this case, we also suggest that consensus among elites, intraparty factions, and public opinion, have been ignored in the literature on parliamentary influence but deserve attention. In this paper, we are not arguing that parliaments are all powerful or are the drivers of most foreign policy. Rather, they seem to play a role more than the literature acknowledges or can account for, and we suggest that their role is very much contingent on other factors, more well-understood by foreign policy analysts. The Turkish case illustrates some of these points, and is a 'critical' test for parliamentary influence in that most of the literature expects that parliamentary influence is least likely under single party rule.

## TURKEY ON IRAQ IN 2003: THE POWER OF PARLIAMENT

### *International and Domestic Contexts*



Foreign policy is rarely a domestic political issue in Turkey; it is rather confined to a debate within the elite and does not arouse interest in the streets. As Robins (2003b:560) puts it, “this was a country in which elite state institutions, not the masses, determined foreign and security policy.” Indeed this was the widely held assumption at the brink of the Iraq war in 2003: despite the public opposition to the war, the government would side with the United States. Moreover, given Turkey’s political and economic dependence on the United States, as well its membership in NATO, some took for granted that Turkey would support US war efforts. Lastly, it was assumed that the influential Turkish military would continue its alliance with the US. The military was also motivated to control Turkey’s border with Iraq and the mountainous part of Northern Iraq. The primary security concern was Iraqi territorial unity; the military was willing to join forces with the US to prevent the creation of a Kurdish State. Overall, the widely shared assumption was that “at the critical moment, Ankara would join a US-led ‘coalition of the willing’, albeit unwillingly” (Robins 2003b:560).

When the Iraq controversy started (see Table 1 for a chronology of key events), however, dynamics of this debate were much different than any other foreign policy debate in Turkey’s history. First, memories of the First Gulf Crisis were fresh for the Turkish elite and mass public. Then, close cooperation with the United States had turned out poorly for Turkey. As the Turks had to encounter huge economic costs (mostly in the form of lost economic relations with Iraq), the economic burden of another war was worrisome. Since the Turkish economy was already in a bad shape, policymakers and the public were concerned that the war would endanger Turkey’s already fragile economic recovery.<sup>ii</sup> In addition to these economic concerns, both elites and the masses were sensitive to political developments in Northern Iraq given the direct implications for Turkey’s Kurdish question.

**Table 1. Key Events**

2002	
Mid-July	Wolfowitz and Grossman in Ankara
October, 21	US military officers in Ankara
November, 3	Turkish elections
Early-November	Turkish Chief of Staff in Washington
Early-December	Wolfowitz and Grossman in Ankara
2003	
January	Turkish PM Gul's Middle East peace offensive
January, 20	General Myers in Ankara
January, 25	Powell meets with PM Gul (Davos, Switzerland)
Early-February	Turkey's Middle East peace initiative: inconclusive
February, 6	Turkish parliament authorizes US upgrade in military bases
February, 8	Memorandum of understanding between US and Turkey
February, 25	Turkish government forwards bill to the parliament
March, 1	Ankara demonstration
March, 1	Motion fails in the Turkish parliament
March, 9	By-elections in Siirt; Erdogan elected into the parliament
March, 14	New government under Erdogan
March, 20	"Operation Iraqi Freedom" starts
March, 20	Third motion (overflight rights) approved by parliament

*Sources:* Bolukbasi (2008), Yetkin (2004), Turkish newspapers

Unlike the first war, the Justice and Development Party (JDP) government faced a difficult task to convince the public that a war against Iraq was necessary once again (Kane Finn 2003). The public's and Turkish leaders' perception was that Iraq "would not... bother Turkey" and, furthermore, "the potential threat from Iraqi weapons of mass destruction has gone largely unnoticed in Turkey" (Cagaptay January 27, 2003). The government's hesitancy and prolonged bargaining between the US and Turkey created speculation and uncertainty, allowing anti-war movements to organize the widest protest events for a foreign policy issue in Turkey. The Turkish public was almost 90% against the war; a US operation in Iraq was regarded as "unlawful, immoral and unprincipled" aggression (Gozen 2005:78). According to Filkins and

Miller (February 18, 2003): “The showdown between the Bush administration and Turkey reflects the deep-seated antipathy felt by an overwhelming majority of the Turkish people for the American military plans. Turkey's leaders say that despite their country's 50-year-old military alliance with the United States, they are finding it difficult to disregard the public's antiwar feelings.” Moreover, the Turks are sensitive about large numbers of foreign troops on Turkish soil (Cagaptay January 27, 2003; Aslan 2005:13). This was an important theme “which was widely shared by the public during the US-Turkey negotiation process” (Gozen 2005:78).

The US administration, however, was clear on what it wanted from Turkey. American requests were demanding: use of Turkey's air bases, stationing of American forces in Turkey, and permission to transit US troops through Turkey (Robins 2003b). The number of US troops to be stationed and other military demands were to be finalized after negotiations. There are different accounts of the details of the negotiations, which were held under three areas: economic, military/security, and political. The US demand for the number of troops to be stationed in Turkey ranges from 15,000 to 90,000; the financial aid offered by the US ranges from \$4 billion (half in grants and half in loans) to \$26 billion (\$6 billion in grants and \$20 billion in loans).

The Turkish government responded to US demands with mixed signals –both to American policymakers and to the Turkish public. Caught between their constituents, the Turkish military (willing to side with the US and share responsibility in Northern Iraq for security purposes) and their strategic partner, the government pursued “a ‘maybe it’ll go away’ approach” (Salmoni 2003). Turkey's loaded foreign policy agenda (including accession talks with the EU) meant little concern for the developing Iraq crisis in its early stages. As Cagaptay (January 27, 2003) notes, “...the Iraq issue first appeared on the front pages of Turkish

newspapers and primetime television news programs only during Wolfowitz's visit." With the election of the JDP into government, however, the talks gained momentum. As these continued, details of the bargaining were made public in the media. While the US delegation started to emphasize the time pressure, the Turks continued to drag their feet (Gordon January 9, 2003). US negotiation tactics may have fed a dislike of the Americans. For instance, Aslan (2005:16) claims that US efforts during the negotiation process "created a reverse effect on the Turkish public opinion as well as on the politicians." Specifically, degrading caricatures of the Turks as bargainers in the American, and some other Western, media aggravated mistrust and dislike of the US. In addition, for Kapsis (2006), US overconfidence and inadequate (lower level) diplomacy were to blame. The memoirs of the head of the Turkish negotiation team (Bolukbasi 2008) confirm this impression. Bolukbasi reports at least one occasion where he left the negotiation room with frustration. Ultimately, however, the agreement reached was favorable for Turkey. The United States offered a huge financial compensation package and agreed to Turkish involvement in Northern Iraq.

This prolonged process of negotiations also created pressure on members of the Turkish parliament (MPs). Indeed, they received, daily, hundreds of text messages: 'Say No to War.' The MPs and the JDP government were not in a position to alienate voters and sympathizers. Although any support for the US plan was probably reluctant (Aslan 2005:16), no one thought the single-party majority government would be rejected by its parliament. Moreover, traditionally in Turkey (and in parliamentary systems broadly), foreign policy was no matter for the parliament.

### *Turkish Foreign Policy Decisionmaking*

There has been a widely shared consensus that the primary actors involved in Turkish foreign policy decision-making are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Turkish military (Candar 2002:56; Tayfur and Goymen 2002:101). Others add the Prime Minister to this duo, and call it a “tripod” of actors (Makovsky and Sayari 2000:4). In addition, the National Security Council (which includes both MFA and representatives of the Turkish military) is also recognized for setting the foreign policy agenda. According to this common view, any other actors are secondary in foreign policy decision-making; it is the domain of MFA and the Turkish military (that is, respectively, the civilian and military bureaucracies) regardless of alternating governments (Kardas 2006:315).

The Turkish parliament, mainly concerned with domestic political issues, has been a secondary player in foreign policymaking (Robins 2003a). Constitutionally, the only circumstance that the parliament was to assume a role in foreign and security issues was at war. The Turkish constitution requires a parliamentary approval for a declaration of war, the stationing of foreign troops in Turkey, and the dispatch of Turkish forces abroad ‘when there is international legitimacy to do so’ (Article 92). But even when parliament is involved, parliament “looks very much like a talking chamber. Its members speak a lot, but in the end they endorse what the cabinet or the chief executive proposes” (Calis 1995:138). The centralized party system leaves little, if any, room for MPs to take part in foreign policymaking; in return for allegiance, MPs expect access to governmental power and resources. While defections to party discipline occur, “they rarely relate to the domain of foreign affairs” (Robins 2003a:79). The Foreign

Affairs Commission of the parliament operates “[a]t the political margins” (Robins 2003a:79). Outside of Turkey, the United States thought there would be no role for the Turkish parliament, assuming the primacy of the military and expecting that government leaders would have the MPs’ support (Salmoni 2003).

Turkish foreign policy decisionmaking has been changing recently. After the Motherland Party era,<sup>iii</sup> the Justice and Development Party (JDP) became the first single party government in Turkey following the 2002 parliamentary elections. As the JDP rule began in November 2002, some argued that “many of the longstanding continuities of Turkish [foreign] policy remain in place” (Robins 2003b:547). Thus, the main characteristics of Turkish foreign policy – specifically, its Western orientation– were preserved. Others noted changes in the foreign policy decision-making environment since the late 1990s (Tayfur and Goymen 2002), such as the addition of the president as an important actor and an increases salience of foreign issues for the public. While the president still lacks any explicit foreign policy authority, his involvement varies according to the personal interest of the individual in office.<sup>iv</sup> Although public interest in foreign policy may have increased, it certainly does not dominate foreign policy: “...the ability of Turkish foreign policy elites to manage public opinion is mostly intact” (Makovsky and Sayari 2000:7). It is also crucial to note that the role of the military in foreign policy and politics in general has been curbed. Changes in formal government structures (such as the National Security Council) and the democratizing effect of EU candidacy brought about observable changes in policymaking (see Kaliber 2005; also see Altunisik 2006; Kirisci 2006). Overall, with favorable conditions (a significant majority in the parliament, a docile military), the government (and the governing party by extension) is the ultimate authority in foreign policy.

### *Turkish Parliament Votes on the Iraq War*

How did the Turkish government decide to ally with the United States? Why, and how, did the parliament that was dominated by the members of the governing party choose not to side with the United States? First of all, the Turkish government (and the governing party) was in disarray over the Iraq war and Turkey's participation. Among other policymakers (see Table 2), the President was openly against the war and emphasized the need for international legitimacy. The military, on the other hand, was uncharacteristically quiet, declaring publicly that the decision was the government's to make. It was, however, also known that military leaders wanted to control developments in Northern Iraq. Chief of Staff Hilmi Ozkok did not openly take a side during the months leading to the Iraq war. Instead, the general noted that the government should be ready to take military measures to protect national interests. In later interviews, Ozkok questioned the idea that a more assertive military would be compatible with Turkey's democratization process (see, for instance, his interview in *Milliyet* October 1, 2007).<sup>y</sup> The previously influential National Security Council assumed only an advisory role, suggesting the government take the (March 1) motion to parliament.

The foreign policy problem that Turkish policymakers were facing at the time was whether to support US war efforts. Turkey's decision was taken in a sequential manner, which involved at least three occasions for decision. These were marked by three motions sent to parliament by the government.

**Table 2. Summary of Positions Taken by Major Political Actors in Turkey before the Iraq War Started**

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Position</b>
<b>The President (Ahmet Necdet Sezer)</b>	Turkey should act according to international norms. No foreign troop deployment; no support for US military campaign.
<b>Cabinet (under PM Gül &amp; the JDP) Parliament (TGNA)</b>	Conditional support for US requests; demand reparations.
<b>JDP</b>	363 seats; before the March 1 vote, it was estimated that 40 to 100 deputies were anti-war.
<b>CHP</b>	178 seats; block “No” vote; no foreign troops; conditional cooperation with the US.
<b>Military</b>	No public declaration, but wanted part in controlling Northern Iraq.
<b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</b>	Low profile; generally tends to support US.
<b>The Business</b>	Pro-war, support for US requests; concerned with economic impact of war.
<b>Public opinion</b>	Anti-war

Table adapted from Aslan (2005:15).

#### *a. The February 6 Motion*

The first response to the United States concerned a permit for site preparation and upgrades in Turkey. While the government accepted this request, the decision required parliamentary approval, since it involved US troops on Turkish soil. On February 6, 2003, parliament passed this resolution with a 308-193 vote, and 9 abstentions. While the results indicated that some members of the governing party were against the motion, the government secured the required parliamentary approval.



This process is consistent with the usual foreign policymaking practice in parliamentary systems; the government makes a decision, and parliament (with some opposition granted) follows suit. At the time the government's motion was submitted to parliament, it was fiercely debated, yet the debates were less controversial compared to the subsequent March 1 motion. A significant difference was that the government did not show much hesitation in early February. Specifically, the government maintained that the motion did not have any major ramifications for Turkey's final decision on the Iraq war. The government's argument was that Turkey could still decide to stay out the war even though it would allow the United States to start site preparation and upgrades at Turkish military bases, harbors, and airports.

Overall, no actor other than the government was significantly involved in the decisionmaking process. The February 6 motion represented the government's willingness to cooperate with the US; notwithstanding the opposition, the motion was ratified by parliament. The decision, however, was not very critical as it did not commit Turkey to further involvement.

#### *b. The March 1 Motion*

When the Turkish MPs finally cast their votes on March 1, 2003 to decide on participation in and support for the US war efforts in Iraq, no one expected the motion would fail. Parliament, however, rejected the government's proposal: 264 MPs voted for the motion, 250 against, and 19 abstained. Because the vote technically required a majority of MPs to be present, the motion failed by three votes.<sup>vi</sup> Unlike the February 6 vote, of those against the motion about 90 MPs were assumed to be governing party members. The number of dissidents was much larger than expected by any one.

This was also unexpected because the motion was based on an agreement between the US and Turkey that was very much in line with the Turkish demands. Indeed, Robins (2003b:564) claims that “[f]or Turkey it was the deal of the decade.” The final text, as it was embodied in the March 1 motion, included 62,000 American troops (also 255 warplanes and 65 helicopters) to be stationed in Turkey, a financial compensation package of \$26 billion (\$2 billion in aid, the rest as loan guarantees), the right for Turkey to deploy 40,000 troops in coordination with the US in northern Iraq, and a US commitment to the maintenance of a unitary state in Iraq (Robins 2003b). The agreement was not far away from what Turkey had requested. The JDP government, with its parliamentary majority, should have enjoyed parliamentary approval its position.

There are a number of factors that led to the rejection of this motion, which prevented cooperation with the United States and in turn blocked the United States’ option of a northern front. Most significantly, the ambiguous and at times inconsistent policy of the Turkish government is striking. For instance, Altunisik (2006) discusses how the Turkish government was trying to convince Saddam Hussein to cooperate as late as February, initiating regional diplomacy in January to seek a peaceful solution to the problem, and in the meantime negotiating with the United States and allowing site preparations in Turkey. These mixed signals were accompanied by a public debate among ministers in cabinet. Only at the beginning of February, Prime Minister Gul finally stated that his government had abandoned efforts for a diplomatic solution and decided to join the United States in military action (Brown 2007:99). The debate ensued as the government’s approach did not go any further than verbal (and at times contradictory) statements.

Table-3 summarizes fragmentation within the cabinet and within the governing party. As the table illustrates, it is noteworthy that the three most influential figures of the governing party (Gul, Erdogan, and Arinc) held contesting views. Moreover, there was considerable disparity in the views of other cabinet members and likewise of those MPs of the governing party in important parliamentary posts.

**Table 3. Fragmentation within the Cabinet and the Justice and Development Party**

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Position</b>
Abdullah Gul	Prime Minister	Reluctant, if not against. No
	Minister of Foreign Affairs (after	clear support for US, until
	March 14, 2003)	early/mid-February
Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Party Leader	Willing to ally with US, given
	Prime Minister (after March 14,	economic and strategic concerns
	2004)	but lacked formal policymaking
		powers and was constrained by
		public opinion
Bulent Arinc	Speaker of TGNA	Against war and Turkey's
		involvement
Ertugrul Yalcinbayir	Deputy Prime Minister	Against war and Turkey's
	(out of cabinet after March 14,	involvement
	2003)	
Abdullatif Sener	Deputy Prime Minister	Against war and Turkey's
		involvement
Yasar Yakis	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Supports cooperation with US
	(out of cabinet after March 14,	
	2003)	
Mehmet Dulger	Chairman of TGNA Foreign	Finds no option but to work with
	Policy Commission	US
Mehmet Elkatmis	Chairman of TGNA Human	Against war and Turkey's
	Rights Commission	involvement

*Sources:* Kardas (2006), various others

The dilemma facing the Turkish government is best summarized in the words of JDP leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan: “Our moral priority is peace, but our political priority is our dear Turkey” (Filkins February 5, 2003). Erdogan was hinting at Turkey’s interests in Northern Iraq and the importance of its alliance with the United States. Yet, such statements, along with open criticisms of a decision to ally with the United States by some cabinet members, only signaled that there was no consensus within the leadership cadres of the JDP. The position of Erdogan was clear from the beginning of the decisionmaking process: Erdogan was strongly in favor of taking a part in the Iraq war. One can argue that his position was rather dictated by the circumstances; indeed, this can be concluded from Erdogan’s speeches at the time.<sup>vii</sup> The assumption was that the United States had made its decision and Turkey was supposed to adjust and stay active in order to minimize its losses. While Erdogan’s position was known, since he was not a member of the cabinet, he could not be very assertive in the weeks leading to the March 1 vote.<sup>viii</sup>

The government’s delay in sending the motion to parliament was another point of confusion. As Robins (2003b:563) puts it, “[r]ather than responding boldly and with leadership to growing signs of dissatisfaction, the government resorted to further vacillation.” Moreover, the government and the JDP leadership did not even force party discipline on the vote; instead, Erdogan stated that the party “would allow [its] group members to act in accordance with what their conscience tells them to do” (Brown 2007:101). Erdogan, like others, never thought the motion would fail and trusted it would pass even without party discipline enforced. While some opposition was expected, the assumption was that it would not be enough to block approval. Despite the tens of thousands protesting the war just a few miles away from parliament on the day of the vote, many believed “the parliament would ignore [the public’s] wishes” (Robins

2003b:565). As the government did not show any resolve on the matter, parliament became the decisionmaking authority. It was in the context of a divided and reluctant executive that MPs made their decision on March 1.

The result surprised the government and the opposition alike. Prime Minister Gul considered resigning, but then was convinced to wait until Erdogan became Prime Minister. One party whips of the opposition party told reporters that defections from the JDP exceeded their calculations (Yetkin March 2, 2003). The leader of the True Path Party claimed that there was a serious rupture between the MPs and the executive branch.<sup>ix</sup> In stark contrast to previous cases, the MPs “ultimately chose to listen to the voice of the public opinion, not to that of the government leadership” (Gozen 2005:79).<sup>x</sup> After the vote, the chairman of the parliament’s Foreign Affairs Commission, Mehmet Dulger of JDP, said a “new motion... should be presented in a different manner to Parliament and a strong-looking government with a stronger voice is also needed” (Balci March 9, 2003).

**Table 4. Results of Parliamentary Votes**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstained</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Feb 6</b>	308	193	9	510
<b>Mar 1</b>	264	250	19	533
<b>Mar 20</b>	332	202	1	535

*c. The March 20 Motion*

After the March 1 vote, the cabinet changed on March 14 as the leader of the JDP, Erdogan, was elected as an MP following a by-election in the province of Siirt. As this

happened, there was also an agreement among policymakers that a new motion should “be re-presented to parliament and pursued with greater vigor” (Robins 2003b:565). This motion, however, did not directly commit Turkey to participate in the Iraq war or allow the United States to use Turkey as a base for a Northern front.

The bill passed with a 332-202 vote and 1 abstention. The March 20 motion received the highest number of supporting votes. The motion granted the United States crucial overflight rights. The Bush administration announced Turkey as a member of the ‘coalition of the willing’ on March 20 (Newnham 2008). Turkey’s decision, while arguably late, was still significant. Overflight rights allowed access to Iraq from north was critical for the invasion and later for supporting combat troops. The vote on March 20, however, was not a product of increased pressure from the United States. After the March 1 vote, US officials publicly praised Turkey’s democratic process. From March 1 to March 20, there no further negotiations occurred and the initial agreement was no longer under consideration. “Instead, after March 1, 2003, Washington withdrew its \$15 billion aid offer and its request to use Turkish territory, telling Turkish officials that they now only sought permission for overflights, to which even France had agreed” (Brown 2007:100). In the end, Turkey did not translate its parliamentary “hand-tying” opposition into a bargaining advantage, as expected by research on two-level games.

Contrary to the context of March 1 motion, there was no doubt about the executive’s position on the March 20 motion. Furthermore, once Erdogan replaced Gul as prime minister, he was able to exert his influence. For instance, before the March 20 vote, when Erdogan announced his cabinet, one of the most vocal critiques of the war, Ertugrul Yalcinbayir (a deputy prime minister), was excluded from any post. Prime Minister Erdogan dominated decisionmaking in the last occasion for decision.

## CONCLUSION

It is imperative that we acquire a nuanced understanding of the role of parliaments in governmental decision-making broadly, and foreign policy specifically. “Parliamentary systems... present interesting questions and challenging demands for analysis” (Ireland and Gartner 2001:564). Conventional wisdom that parliaments play a limited role in foreign policymaking is questioned in Turkey’s Iraq decision. Contrary to the common expectation that parliaments merely follow the executive’s lead in foreign policy matters, the case illustrates that this is not necessarily given –even for single party majority governments and even when the country is being pressured by a powerful and traditional ally.

Turkey’s decision on Iraq was a critical case that challenged conventional understanding but reflected the points from research on two-level games, decision units and oppositions, and research on the democratic peace. Specifically, 1) the parliament became an important player, a source of opposition and a constraint in a “high politics” security issue; 2) the decisionmaking authority varied across three occasions for decision; 3) decisionmaking dynamics included political, institutional, and leadership elements; and 4) the parliament’s role was influenced, but not determined, by other factors such as intraparty divisions and public opinion.

This case is not unique; there are indeed other cases when a parliament did not support a single party government or at least gave the government a difficult time in gaining its approval. And, as Sieberer (2006:171) notes, “even seemingly innocuous deviations from party unity may

have important consequences." Single party governments, which have "well-defined internal divisions" (Hagan 1993:36), such as the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party, may have to deal with factions and face significant internal opposition, allowing a role for parliament. For instance, Britain's decisions on the then European Economic Community during the Conservative Party governments are also illustrative of intraparty divisions over foreign policy (see Baker et al. 1993, 1994; Garry 1995). Indeed, in a recent study, Benedetto and Hix (2007) argue that backbench revolts in the major parties in the British House of Commons have increased since the 1960s and ideologically-based party factions are more common in Britain than is often assumed. Party discipline tools do not work all the time, or for all members. Benedetto and Hix contend that certain conditions, such as the government's time in office and ideological profile of the next cabinet, facilitate backbench rebellions.

Foreign policy analysts have paid limited attention to political parties in parliamentary systems' foreign policymaking. Indeed, Hazan (2000) argues that there is a paucity of research on the effects of intraparty politics on foreign policy, particularly the internal cohesion of governing parties. Rathbun (2004) makes a strong argument that partisanship and political parties matter in state policies on humanitarian interventions, but primarily focuses on what divides parties, rather than looking at intraparty divisions and does not place parties in an institutional context, such as parliament.<sup>xi</sup>

Divided parties open the door for parliaments to influence foreign policy and Hill (2003) argues that parliamentary influence is likely to grow as foreign policy becomes more important to daily political life. Likewise, changes in institutional setting may bring about an increased role for parliaments in foreign policymaking. For instance, in Finland, "foreign policy decision making has undergone a significant transformation, as the dominant position of the president has



been reduced to a more ceremonial one, and foreign policy has been parliamentarized” (Raunio and Wiberg 2001: 81).

In the Turkish case, the public, still remembering the consequences of the 1991 Gulf War, was vocal and attempted to affect governmental decisionmaking. Unlike the past, the Turkish public in early 2003 found an open avenue to influence its government’s decision on the Iraq war, but it was not inevitable that the public’s wishes would be heeded. In the end, Turkey’s decision was its parliament’s choice. While no single institution wanted to assume responsibility for this decision (Brown 2007:103), it was ultimately for parliament to decide on the Iraq war. Indecisiveness and lack of leadership only helped the MPs to vote as they wished: “the government *allowed* parliament the final word” (Newnham 2008:187; emphasis added). When the executive does not lead, the traditional ways to enforce party discipline are not operative and MPs become more open to public pressure. Here, we can observe the accountability arguments of the democratic peace research which are reinforced when the party leadership is publicly divided. In contrast, parliaments have a limited role in foreign policy when there is a strong executive branch leadership, reinforced by party discipline in the ruling party. Under such circumstances, the public (unlike what the democratic peace research assumes) has little if any influence over foreign policy decisions. In these cases, elites are either willing to pay political costs for their decisions or believe that they can manipulate public opinion.

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<sup>i</sup> There is, of course, a vibrant area of research on the U.S. Congress in foreign policy, but this article focuses only on parliamentary systems.

<sup>ii</sup> According to a poll reported by the Hurriyet daily newspaper, in early November 58.3 percent of the respondents told that in an occasion of war Turkey would primarily suffer in economic terms (<<http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/2002/12/04/216235.asp>>, accessed November 3, 2009).

<sup>iii</sup> Following the 1980 coup, Turgut Ozal and his Motherland Party (ANAP) ruled Turkey for about a decade. Ozal first came to power after parliamentary elections in 1983 and was the Prime Minister until the Turkish Parliament selected him as President in 1989.

<sup>iv</sup> See, Makovsky and Sayari 2000:5; Ozcan 2001:14-15.

<sup>v</sup> In addition, after reports that it was not satisfied with the negotiations, the Turkish military released a press statement on February 27, 2003 that it refrains from any act to influence parliament's decision.



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<sup>vi</sup> A total of 533 MPs were present in the chamber; for the motion to be ratified, a vote of 267 was required.

<sup>vii</sup> Particularly his speeches to the JDP group in the parliament on February 5, 26, and 27, 2003.

<sup>viii</sup> Erdogan did not run in the 2002 elections because he had been banned from running for or holding political office. He was imprisoned in 1998 for reciting a poem, which allegedly incited religious hatred. After a constitutional amendment and a by-election, he was elected to parliament on March 9, 2003.

<sup>ix</sup> “CHP’de sevinc.” (March 2, 2003) *Radikal*.

(<<http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalHaberDetay&ArticleID=662456&Date=2.3.2003&CategoryID=98>>, accessed November 10, 2009).

<sup>x</sup> On the impact of public opinion in the March 1<sup>st</sup> decision, also see Hale (2007:103) and Ozcan (2008:101).

<sup>xi</sup> See also Jürgen Schuster and Herbert Maier. (2006) “The Rift: Explaining Europe’s Divergent Iraq Policies in the Run-Up of the American-Led War on Iraq.” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2:223-244, and Jean-Philippe Therien and Alain Noel. (2000) “Political parties and foreign aid.” *American Political Science Review* 94(1):151-162.